

Pulp

by Katie Arnt

When I was in eighth grade, I destroyed my poems,
a sad-sap stack, five inches thick, drowning them
in a stream of yellow rust-water until they became
a pulpy, inky composite weeping in my palms.

I did this in hopes of removing anything proving that there
once was a fourteen-year-old girl, who realized that
her poems were bad, and that rhyming *love* with *of* and
life with *strife* a hundred times becomes tedious and dull
and uninteresting.

As uninteresting as she felt when she realized the boys
weren't wedging little folded pieces of paper into the slats
of her locker or sneaking glances at her from behind
history books or lending her their sweatshirts when she
felt a chill but wasn't really cold at all but wanted to
show everyone that he had given her his sweatshirt and had
paid attention.

So I tipped the quaggy mass into the wastebin
to compost with pencil shavings and used tissues and
the broken hairclips of the pretty girls, to be erased by
college classes that taught me language and lyricism
and college boys who taught me that boys never really
change, except they're given liquor and

late nights and stronger arms attached to sinewy
hands impervious to fingernails and fists and
elbows and teeth, transforming girls into pieces
of meat, with one flick of the wrist and the words
Quiet or I'll make you.